

*Washington, DC - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today joined Environmental Protection Agency Regional Administrator Judith Enck to mark the commencement of the final phase of dredging of the Hudson River. As Chair of the New York State Assembly's Environmental Conservation Committee and later as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, Hinchey has worked for over 30 years to ensure a proper cleanup and removal of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) from the Hudson River. His prepared remarks for the occasion follow:*

"I'm delighted to be with all of you this afternoon to mark this very significant milestone in the ongoing restoration of one of this nation's greatest and most historic waterways.

The start of the second, and final phase, of this environmental cleanup earlier this week here in the upper Hudson River is the culmination of many decades of science, citizen activism and hard work.

As we celebrate the resumption of this cleanup, we should recognize and salute all of the individuals, organizations and public officials up-river and down-river whose committed efforts made this day possible.

While this phase of the cleanup will take a number of years to complete, its commencement is an important step forward in removing the PCB contamination that has plagued this great River for many decades and earned our American Heritage River the dubious distinction of also being the largest Superfund site in the country.

As many of you know, I have personally worked on this issue for nearly four decades and was very involved in this issue during my fourteen-year tenure as the Chairman of the Environmental Conservation Committee.

I have continued this work as a member of Congress to push back against continued delays and attempts to weaken the cleanup standards for this project.

I deeply appreciate EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson and our Regional Administrator Judith Enck for their ongoing commitment and vigilance on this vital cleanup project. We know that without the strong support of the current Administration, this project could have faced an uncertain outcome and continued delays, as it did in the previous Administration.

While the start of the Hudson River cleanup has taken many years longer than many of us would have liked, today is key step forward in restoring the integrity and health of our River and protecting its diverse communities up and down the Valley.

General Electric's dumping of toxic PCBs at Fort Edward and Hudson Falls represents a part of the tragic legacy of much of the last century when the Hudson River served as a dumping ground for industrial wastes and untreated wastewater.

For generations, these PCBs have limited recreational and commercial uses of our River and threatened the public health and the environment.

The eventual completion of this long-awaited cleanup will help to reverse that unfortunate legacy and better allow our communities to more fully enjoy the incredible resources of our unique and magnificent Hudson River.

This clean-up will restore the Hudson River to its full greatness and further allow residents and visitors to truly enjoy the beauty and majesty of what I believe is America's greatest river.

I appreciate the opportunity to join you today and look forward to returning here to celebrate the completion of this historic and essential cleanup project."